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COLLECTING AMERICAN FOLKLORE FOR THE  
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

People in all parts of the United States have been contributing hundreds of items to the American folklore collections of the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. They became active in this field of collecting as the result

of a five-minute radio talk on folklore which is included in "Weekend," a two-hour program heard Sundays over the National Broadcasting Company network. (A new talk is prepared each week by a staff member of the Library's Folklore Section.)

Folklore, which is the term applied to the songs, stories, popular sayings, customs and superstitions handed down from generation to generation, has long been a subject of study because of the light it throws on the social history of a people. Thus American folklore—a mingling of the lore of peoples from all lands and of all regions of the country—mirrors the everyday lives of Americans from the time they were gradually settling one region after another on this continent, through all the rapid changes that transformed a rural and agricultural society into an urban and industrial one.

The varied American folklore topics covered in the Library's part of the "Weekend" program have included the following: Folk Speech and Folk Language; Place Names; Children's Games and Rhymes; "Tall" Tales (incredible tales); Traditional Home Remedies; Beliefs and Customs Relating to courtship and Marriage; The Definition of Folksong. Many of these five-minute programs have been illustrated with songs and music from the Library's Archive of American Folksong. (The Library has been collecting and recording American folksongs since 1928 and it now has more than 40,000 different songs, including many from Latin America.)

The heavy response of radio listeners to requests for additional folklore material, the Library says, indicates a nostalgic interest in America's past and a confidence that the material submitted will become part of the American record in the Library of Congress.

The Folklore Section of the Library proposes to transfer to filing cards the pertinent folklore material received from each radio listener, the name of the person contributing it, and the place and the date. While the place of origin will be indicated, since this is important information, the exact address of the person sending in a bit of folklore will be kept in a non-public file.

The **Information Bulletin** of the Library gives the following example of a contribution in the field of home cures and folk remedies, chosen at random from hundreds received: "Cures, Warts: In my home, when I was a child in Everett, Massachusetts, I had many warts on my right hand, big seedy ones. The cure for these was to take a piece of white blackboard chalk, stroke the warts one by one, at the same time invoking the Blessed Trinity . . . Then make as many strokes with the chalk on the side of the parlor stove. When the strokes on the stove become obliterated through heat, the warts would miraculously disappear. This is the absolute truth."

A single folklore item such as this seems merely curious, the Library notes, but in great numbers such items provide material for future studies that will relate to them a revelant aspect of American social history.

The Folklore Section has received so many bits of folklore from interested radio listeners that it has not been able to acknowledge them all, but it expects to catch up with its mail in the near future. In the meantime it hopes that contributors will not be discouraged, since it wants to build up a great central collection reflecting the folk traditions and customs of the American people. The assistance of hundreds, even thousands of persons, is needed and their active cooperation is welcomed. Presumably it is not necessary to hear the Library's five-minute radio program in order to become a contributor to its folklore collections. (Common Council.)

## VILTIS ANNIVERSARY PARTY



Ginger and Comdr. William Francis with Evelyn Prewett, wearing Catalan costumes and in a Sardana pose. Bill's costume was flown from Barcelona especially for this event.

Clinton Taylor, YN2 USN, as the Japanese Eel Fisher, one of the "hit dances." This number, by special request, was represented at the Long Beach Statewide Festival.

Angelina Pan and Roy Hinton, PN3 USN whipping it up during Las Espueals, a Mexican Charro dance.

Violeta Mitkus is trying to evade the flirtatious advance of Norman Kades in the Lithuanian dance Lenciugelis. These are Lucille Zaikis' dancers. (All fotos by Art Noble, PH3, USN.)

The consensus of opinions was that the VILTIS Birthday Party on May 2nd was "Wonderful, beautiful, unusual, enjoyable, different, etc." and other superlatives. No doubt there were some "die-hard" Federationist who probably found objection to the fact that there were free polkas, waltzes, tangos, etc. They are accustomed to have every dance set to a pattern for them, not to leave anything to tax their imaginations, but such were very few. On a whole the general free dances (free of figures or patterns).

The first half, from 1:00 to 1:30 was set aside to records of Federation dances, such as the Corrido, Zillertaller, Meitschi Putzi Di, Schuplattler, etc., nine in all. Then, every hour on the half hour the orchestra played polkas, waltzes, obereks, schottisches, koja-koja, tangos, rumbas, etc. While every hour on the hour were presented programs.

The 2 o'clock program with Vivian Woll's group of San Diego who did an elegant Mazur as done by the Polish Panstwa (upper crust) (One of Vyts'es dances.) They did an excellent job and portrayed the dignity and aloofness of the Pan's very correctly. They were followed by the Gandy Dancers who also did a Mazur, but one of the people, the plain folk, vivacious, gay and more "down-to-earth". The contrast of the two was plain. These were followed by a group of A-rabs from the U. S. Navy dressed in genuine imitation, doing a circle debka and the unique Debka Rafiakh. As the "Sheikhs" sat down, three "Shikses" in sheer pantaloons and veils, did their debka to accompaniment of finger cymbals. Vyts followed them with his Camel dance and once again the Sheikhs danced the vigorous debka. This was a picturesque scene like a bit of Araby transplanted.

The 3 o'clock program was, we could state with almost certainty, an entirely new presentation for anywhere in the United States. Thus far, the Espunyolet was the only

Catalan dance in this country, at this program three more dances made their appearance, Castell Ter Sol, a very enchanting dance of the "Ceremonial" classifications which was performed at the opening of important festivals when the mayor himself, with the select maiden of the town, led in a group of dancers for the opening of the festivities. The entrance is very grave and the dance becomes exhilarative, colorful and gay and it terminates again in the same dignified manner. Next the group did the Sardana, the national dance of the Catalan people. The music is most pleasing to the ear, not only of this particular Sardana but all Sardanas, it embodies in it the hopes, prayers and the dignity of a people thirsting to be free, and the dancers, the males being Navy men (including one full Commander, Wm. Francis, who with his wife, also in the group, lived among the Catalans and loved them), along with the women of the group were able to portray these Catalan longings and their manner of dignity of carriage in these dances. The Catalan group was closed with gay Mallorca Copeo. After which, the program audience followed up with the Catalan dance they know and love, the Espunyoleit.

The 4 o'clock program was transplanted to Lithuania when a group of agricultural dances were performed by the VILTIS Dancers, now ex-Arabs and ex-Catalans. Each of these nationalities, these dancers represented most creditably and even looked their part. They looked as Arabs when doing the Debkas, later as Catalans, now they were undistinguishable from real Lithuanians. They performed the Rye Harvest (Rugučiai), žiogelis, the Men's Mikita, and the graceful girls' Dance, Kepurinė. The Los Angeles authentic Lith group of Lucille Zaikis danced Lenciugėlis with Norman Kades doing his part the best I've ever seen. That was followed by the gay Dzuku. Then both groups combined to do the Kubilas and there were plenty fingers crossed wondering how two strange groups would work out in combination, but they did it well and with flying colors, making this dance a proper one to close the Lithuanian group.

The five o'clock program consisted of solos and kolos. Angelina Pan and Roy Hinton did well the Charro Dance. Las Espuelas, with spurs, whip and what not. The Japanese Eel Fisher was delightful and excellently performed by Clinton Taylor who had the Japanese feel for it. Vyts did an angular East India dance, and Will Kinsey, the agile star dancer of the Gandy's performed the very intricate Ukrainian Honta. Because of its difficulty this dance is rarely seen. It is a dance which represents the battle and death of Honta who existed during the very trying period of the Khmielnitsky Era of 1648, when in the struggle